

THE PROBLEM OF A FREE MINISTRY.

STIRRED by a general sense of shortcoming, the recent Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends published a pastoral letter on Worship and Ministry.* Both the letter, and the discussion which gave rise to it provide us with helpful and encouraging suggestions, but neither claim to solve the problem which a free lay ministry presents. If these suggestions to individuals are to have their full value, we must go further, and consider what are the conditions of life in the church at large to foster a strong ministry.

But in thus approaching our subject, let us briefly anticipate two questions:—

(1) Is a free ministry a vital element in our conception of public worship?

(2) Is the Quaker conception of public worship of essential and permanent value?

In the pastoral letter already referred to, we are told that “an active attitude of soul is of the very essence of a good meeting.” This means that we recognise what has been well called “the divine work of worship,” the need for that individual exercise of spirit, without which there can be no true communion with God. We ignore the outward help of ritual and of a set ser-

* “Worship and Ministry.” A letter from London Yearly Meeting on Ministry and Oversight, 1899, to the congregations and individual members of the Society of Friends.

vice, because of the stress we lay on this supreme individual necessity. Our silent waiting is the opportunity for the prisoned soul to escape into the freedom of spiritual intercourse.

Friends do not assert that ceremonial precludes true spiritual communion. But they believe that in the course of history, symbolism has always tended to become a hindrance rather than an aid to spiritual worship, and that an ordered service, however dignified and uplifting, offers an inadequate and an inelastic substitute for the immediate dependence of the soul upon God.

Apart from all sacerdotal pretensions which we reject as contrary to the teaching of Jesus, we hold that to limit the service of the vocal ministry to one person, or to a separate class, is not, as is commonly maintained, a necessary condition of church life.

The freedom of the ministry prevalent in the early days of the Christian Church is still the ideal, and its restriction in the interests of order and dignity, even if justified on the ground of human infirmity, cannot fairly be presented as a survival of the *ideally* fittest or as a stage in *ideal* development. The surrender of the "lay" ministry involved the quenching of the Spirit, the closing of the door to the divine call to prophesy. Friends believe that the restriction of the ministry is at best but a stage to be outgrown, and that it is their office to seek the reinstatement of the higher ideal. The doctrine of immediate dependence carries with it the diffusion of responsibility and an emphasis on "the divine work of worship," which ought powerfully to combat those tendencies to parasi-

tism and to worship by proxy, which a prearranged service of necessity invites.

In spite of our acknowledged weakness, this ideal has been a source of strength in our Society. It is to this special sense of the share and responsibility of the individual in the work of worship, that we must largely attribute that force of character which has given the Society of Friends an influence out of proportion to its numbers.

A free ministry, then, is a vital element in our conception of worship.

But, in the second place, can we further claim that our conception of worship is of essential and permanent value ?

To find our answer we need only study the widely prevailing tendency towards more elaborate ceremonial, and the facility with which the element of real worship is lost in musical or other services which do not appeal to the spiritual faculties. This is an age of pleasure. Religion must be dressed in pleasing raiment, or it is rejected as narrow and intolerant. The Sword of the Word must have a velvet scabbard ; the inexorable realities of spiritual law must be hidden in a golden haze. The divine work of worship is too onerous. It must be lightened or evaded by ceremonial, or by the offices of a priest. But spiritual consciousness is not the involuntary emotion produced by music or ritual. It is the fruit of a voluntary effort of the soul, and no evasion of spiritual exercise can give us spiritual life.

The clear testimony to this truth afforded by the Society of Friends in their ideal of worship is, then, of essential and permanent value.

But are we in a position to present this ideal, not as a beautiful theory, but as a living fact? It is when we come to answer this question that we falter, for we know at heart that our meetings for worship are the weakest point in our church life. The responsibility of a free ministry must be carefully considered in the light of this fact, and such consideration will show that the free ministry presents a practical problem which has not yet been solved.

In thus treating our subject as a problem for solution, we need scarcely be reminded that nothing can be accomplished without pure life, heart surrender, and spiritual power. If these be absent, nothing else can have any value.

It is needful to make this clear at the outset, because those who make practical suggestions are sometimes supposed to confound machinery with power. There are those who feel a deep distrust of any approach to system in matters relating to our meetings for worship. Their attitude of mind is illustrated in its extreme form in the words of a valued Friend, who says :—

“ It is very important to remember that no change of organization will put new life into souls, no change of methods can increase the spiritual tone of the community. A man's surroundings will not improve him. System will not make a healthy church.”

These statements belong to that class of half truths which, unless rightly qualified, are apt to do serious harm. The words are true if we take them to mean that without spiritual power the spiritual machinery of the church is impotent for good. But

they are not true if we understand them as implying that changes in organization are valueless even where they are the result of spiritual power intelligently directed. Practical measures, such as changes in organization, must necessarily affect the church for good or ill. The Friend already quoted virtually admits this in acknowledging that "there are certain and indispensable conditions by which alone we can carry the Word of Life to others." Among these are mentioned study and meditation. But to secure time for study and meditation in the life of a business man involves the proper arrangement of affairs, and such a change in the organization of a business life may undoubtedly result in a direct access of spiritual power to the Church. What applies in this way to the individual applies also to the church as a whole. As already insisted, we shall find, as we seriously study the problem of our ministry, both in the light of past history and present conditions, that though the question is primarily one of spiritual power, it is certainly one which calls for practical common sense. Spiritual power and church organization are so closely inter-related that they cannot be fully considered apart. The familiar illustration of the Evangelical revival must not be forgotten. Great as was the influence of Whitefield, it would have been largely evanescent but for the organizing genius of Wesley. The fear of what is called the systematizing of spiritual matters is nevertheless entitled to all respect. If the Society of Friends were to become a mere mechanism, its day would be over. That point is conceded; the question which remains is the nature and limit of the

organization needful to secure the healthy development of the ministry in our church.

Having thus attempted to clear the ground, we are free to consider our subject as now outlined, and it may help us to escape from traditional ideas to view it for a moment from the standpoint of an outsider.

A member of another denomination, aware that his own clergyman or minister had passed through a severe course of training, and possessed mental equipment and leisure for his service altogether beyond what any layman in his congregation possessed, would probably feel considerable surprise on discovering a group of laymen in the same walk of life as himself, content to dispense with the minister, and willing to supply the ministry themselves. He would note that these laymen, so far from being men of much leisure or scholarship, were of that class who are chiefly busy all the week in office, warehouse, and shop—perhaps prominent on Town Council or School Board. He would further note that they gave their best energies to an extensive Sunday School work, without endeavouring to render this in return a support to the church. He would naturally feel that these men had dared to take upon themselves a very heavy responsibility in thus foregoing the help of a separated ministry, and departing from a universal practice. He would wonder how, with all the many claims pressing upon them, these laymen could find the means and the time to equip themselves for their voluntary service. But his wonder would increase with closer acquaintance as he discovered how few among these busy men gave much time or thought to the ministry,

and how readily its claims were permitted to give way to others, which were deemed more urgent.

Doubtless, some things would favourably impress him. The freedom from monetary considerations would come upon him with a sense of relief. He would at once appreciate the marked service of women's ministry. He would learn to recognise that laymen, unacquainted with Biblical Criticism or modern scholarship, can gather material for helpful sermons in the practical experience of a busy week, and that the effect of such ministry, coming from a manufacturer, or shopkeeper, or artizan, had its peculiar value. He would notice the existence of a spontaneous ministry of real spiritual helpfulness, and of a type impossible under the conditions of his own denomination, and would recognise that, in spite of the disadvantages of scanty leisure and imperfect equipment, some few of their ministers could fill the pulpit of any denomination with distinction. But these considerations could not conceal from him the fact that a large proportion of the ministry failed in its purpose, and lacked that force and application which better equipment and further knowledge would have given to it, and he would hardly be surprised when he discovered a prevalent sense of shortcoming. Even if he did not condemn the lay ministry as impracticable, he would infer an inadequate conception either of the value and purpose of the ministry, or of the self-sacrifice it involves.

Without accepting this sketch (which has been constructed entirely from the actual comments of friendly outsiders), as either accurate or complete,

we shall unite in acknowledging that self-sacrifice is the price of our ideal. Without this it would indeed be found, as some have pronounced it, a beautiful, but impracticable dream.

Nor does the measure of that self-sacrifice decrease as time goes by. We hardly realise the advantages which the ministers of other denominations enjoy. The rich store of modern scholarship is placed within their reach. Picked men are at their service as teachers and guides. Freed from the worry and distractions of business life, the young man called to the ministry may bend himself whole-heartedly to the work of equipment. Only ignorance will maintain that these advantages are of no moment. At our Summer Schools we learn to measure our loss. Moreover, the standard of training in other churches is being continually raised. The new learning, the work of men of the stamp of Robertson Smith, is beginning to tell. Those who come under this influence, infuse new life into their ministry. Their interpretation of the Bible has a freshness that ours sorely lacks, and the life and teaching of Christ, studied not only in a new aspect, but with unprecedented patience, are no longer presented in conventional phraseology, but with the nervous force of a compelling message.

In this connection we must bear in mind that Friends are no longer restricted in the development of their energies. The abolition of the Test and Corporation Acts opened a field of public and municipal service hitherto closed. Prior to this change it would be more natural to concentrate upon the ministry and to travel largely, as the custom was, in the service

of the Gospel. And now the Adult School has come to assert its claims, and to absorb much of our time and strength. Moreover, our young people have escaped into the outer world. The Quaker meeting no longer holds the same large place in their imagination. Young Friends have learnt to measure by other standards. They have heard other ministry, and perhaps their hearts have first been reached in places very different from the plain Meeting-house. Their loyalty must be held by ties stronger than were deemed sufficient in the times of exclusiveness. For in those days the ministry in other denominations was seldom such as to tempt an envious comparison. But Anglican dulness and the frequent crudity of the Nonconformist are yielding place to such virile ministry as that of Canon Gore and Dr. Dale.

It may here be objected that learned or eloquent discourses are out of place in a Friends' Meeting, that too much may be made of intellectual equipment, that the Quaker ministry must be of a type by itself, and that in a meeting for worship the importance of the sermon must be relatively small.

But these objections must not be pushed too far. The cause of Christ can best be served when to the consecration of the heart is added the consecration of intellectual gifts.

Isaiah teaches us the value of an eloquence sincere and free from artificial taint, and experience shows that meetings which are not fed by thoughtful and uplifting sermons will ultimately languish. Let us remember that the phrase "meeting for worship" does not entirely express the purpose for which we

assemble. Whilst mainly for adoration and spiritual communion, it is the chief opportunity for mutual edification and instruction. Further, this is an age when it has become more than ever necessary to command the allegiance of both head and heart, especially of the young. To meet this end, we need not only spiritual warmth, but the mental sympathy that is fostered and widened by knowledge.

It is clear upon the briefest survey that the burden of a free ministry is not a light one.

In view of the equipment provided by other denominations, what are our corresponding advantages ?

Our Adult Schools and the valuable lessons of experience learnt in other fields of Christian labour, afford an equipment of an *indirect* character, but it would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that our church ignores the need for an equipment that is *direct*. Everything is left to the sense of individual responsibility. The Quaker minister often serves his meeting at considerable self-sacrifice, but his education, his religious training, and the arrangement of his time are rarely controlled by any sense of the special qualification which the ministry demands. His education has been of the ordinary middle class standard ; if he has had any definite religious instruction it has been fragmentary ; and while he is no less engrossed in business than his neighbour who profits from Sunday to Sunday by the thoughtful sermons of a trained minister, he probably still further curtails his leisure by taking a larger share in the responsibilities of citizenship. He takes on himself more work and

receives less instruction. Once in a few years an official exhortation to the ministry from the Yearly Meeting may reach him. His Meeting on Ministry and Oversight takes no steps to develop his gift, and his Elders mainly confine their office to its negative aspects.

The strong sense of responsibility, and the degree of self-sacrifice which our ministry represents, under these depressing conditions, are an encouraging evidence of life, but the limitations of such haphazard ways are only too obvious. Exhortations to our ministers will not meet the case. Our ministry labours under practical disadvantages which must be met by practical measures. Our present deficiencies cannot be overcome by thus reserving for the ministry the lees of our energy and the fag-ends of our time.

The church must come to close quarters with the problem :—How can we maintain a free ministry among busy men, who feel the exacting toll of increasing commercial competition ; and at the same time, how can we give to this ministry an intelligence, directness and attractive force, which, though the ministry may be of a different type from that of other denominations, shall at least render it comparable in effectiveness ?

In attempting to seek an escape from this apparent dilemma, let us briefly consider the attitude of mind that has led us into our present condition. It cannot be maintained that the sole explanation of our incomplete equipment is the absence of a self-sacrificing spirit. This, no doubt, plays some part, but the fact remains that while many Friends are not alive to the necessity for such equipment, there are others who deprecate it.

We believe the truer explanation lies in that dread of what are called human arrangements to which we have already had occasion to refer.

This dread rests upon weighty reasons, but it must be clearly recognised that the characteristic note of the Quaker Meeting, with its cherished freedom of spiritual dependence upon God, is endangered not by the intellectual equipment of the ministry, but by its restriction to one man or to one type. It is difficult to overestimate the extent of the mischief which this dread has wrought. In the first place, it has led to a limited view of what constitutes a call to the ministry. It is profoundly true that God does call his servant unexpectedly in the presence of a congregation, and bid him speak unprepared. We may rejoice that Friends have never minimized that supreme prophetic gift. It is also true that no minister can rightly speak without a strong conviction when he rises that what he says is said in season. But the deduction that there can be no call during the week, and no right preparation of the message, is wholly inadmissible. God works in many ways, and Friends living in the freedom of the Spirit should be the last to maintain such an artificial limitation.

The consequences of this mistaken view, now happily losing its hold, have hardly received sufficient recognition. It must be ranked with the dread of "creaturely activity" and the reckless disownments for marrying a non-member, as among the three chief causes of disaster in the recent history of our church. To it must be attributed much of our weakness in the intellectual equipment of the ministry. Indeed, in its

extreme form, this view has regarded the intellect as an enemy to be fought rather than an ally to be welcomed.

It is to this view that we must trace the almost entire neglect of the spiritual gift of a teaching ministry. Marks of preparation in a sermon have been resented, and thus through fear of giving offence, a type of mind that would have lent added definiteness and weight to the ministry has been largely excluded, and it is not too much to say that the removal of this difficulty alone would call much valuable ministry into existence. The mistaken view which practically limits the Quaker ministry to the prophetic type has caused many needlessly to doubt their qualification. We cherish the memory of those rare spiritual gifts which, in men like Stephen Grellet and Benjamin Seebohm, were so powerfully used in the service of Truth, but while we do well to value them, we cannot rightly assume that lesser gifts do not qualify for service.

Again, we must recognise that the dread of the human element has encouraged the spirit of indolence, and lulled Friends into a belief that the minister need set no time apart for study or definite meditation.

It is, however, not difficult to see that this fear of preparation has even wider consequences than those already enumerated. It is closely associated with that strange haziness which characterises the mind of the average Friend, when questioned as to the historical and spiritual significance of his church. Our ignorance, both as to the facts of our church history with their meaning for the present and the future, and the want of any adequate conception of our spiritual

heritage, is not likely to develop the gifts latent amongst us. This haziness has, to a considerable extent, robbed our ministry of its proper formative influence, and given to our appeal as a church a confused character, lacking coherence, and a clear-cut outline. A small body like the Society of Friends, which has with almost dramatic suddenness broken down its social barriers and mingled with the world after a century of aloofness, must have very clear convictions if it is not to lose its identity.

We have now discovered our main principle of action, in dealing with the problem of the lay ministry. *If there is to be a strong ministry in our church, a rich soil must be provided for its growth.*

All questions of the distribution of the ministry, especially in relation to declining meetings, or the establishment of new ones, are of subordinate importance. Something can even now be done in these fields, but until the conditions of Church life are so altered that the gift of the ministry is fostered and not discouraged, nothing great can be accomplished. Sooner or later we shall be brought up by the fact that we have not the Friends qualified for the service. As a church, we have yet to learn that a minister is *both born and made.*

Assuming, then, that we recognise our need for equipment, how and where is that equipment to begin? Our first preparation for the ministry must be as wide as the church. In accepting the sacred burden of a free ministry, we lay it upon every member of the Society of Friends. We must so shape our life that we may bear that burden worthily. We demand more of

our members than almost any other church, and we must adopt special measures to qualify them. Our consideration of this first preparation will fall naturally under three heads :—

(1) The training of children in Friends' Boarding Schools.

(2) The religious training of our young people after leaving school, and of those who are not taught in Friends' Schools.

(3) The religious training of our adult members.

(1) *The training of children in Friends' Boarding Schools.*

During a recent visit to America, undertaken with a view to the study of the whole question upon which we are now engaged, the writer was impressed with the clear evidence that where undenominational education prevailed, it was telling adversely upon Friends.

We are aware that there are thoughtful Friends on this side of the Atlantic who deprecate any denominational colour being given to our schools. They claim that any distinctive Quaker training must be given exclusively at home and in the Meeting. This, however, will be found insufficient. In many homes the parents are not qualified to supply the needful training, while there is practically no sustained effort in the Meeting to give any training which can rightly be called distinctive. In any case, the time spent at school covers so large a part of the plastic period of life, that the church cannot neglect the valuable opportunity afforded by school instruction.

The objection to denominational education arises from the malpractices which flourish under that name.

We do not mean that our pupils shall be forced by a sort of Jesuitry into accepting statements *ex cathedra*, but we do mean that they shall have pointedly placed before them the practical, spiritual, and non-sacerdotal aspects of divine truth in relation to individual and national life. In teaching secular history, we unhesitatingly deduce the lessons or warnings offered by states founded on slavery or formed on freedom, ruled by despots or ruled by patriots, reverencing character or bent on pleasure, and it would be absurd to deprive Biblical and Church history (not forgetting the history of our own Society) of the broad lessons which they teach.

Fifty years ago, when we were an exclusive people, undenominational schools might have had much-needed liberalizing influence, but the conditions are very different to-day. It has now become necessary, if we would check the serious disaffection of educated young Friends, to provide them with the data upon which to form their opinions in later life. No boy or girl educated in a Friends' school, should leave it without having seen how, in the main, sacerdotalism has dimmed the moral vision, and without at least a knowledge of the history, and of the broad underlying principles, of our religious Society. We will have nothing to do, either with catechism or creed, and we are quite right to leave our scholars free to form their own independent judgment—for nothing else would have any but the most superficial or transient value. But it would be folly to send our young men and women out into the world ignorant even of the historical meaning of their church.

Young people, perhaps especially young men, are keenly sensitive to adverse criticism and ridicule. What chance has a young man, sent from a Friends' School to one of the Universities, with their aggressive clerical influence, if to the chaff about the silent meetings he has no explanation to offer, no conception of the spiritual beauty of the ideal it represents? Or, if he finds himself in a weak meeting without strong Ministry, there is danger, unless he has some intelligent attachment to the essential ideal of our worship, that he will become discouraged, and either yield to the seductive influence of the Anglican Church or seek robust ministry elsewhere. We lose too many of our more highly educated young people at this stage, and they will need a stronger grip on the true principles of spiritual life and worship to carry them through it.

In some of our Boarding Schools, valuable work has already been done, and their influence has been a powerful factor in stimulating the loyalty of their scholars to the Society. But our whole conception of education is inadequate—it needs broadening, and above all it needs shaping far more definitely to the peculiar needs of a membership upon which the responsibility of a free lay ministry rests.

It is not enough, as some suppose, to rely alone upon the high moral tone which is rightly held to characterize a Friends' school. We must recognise that these schools have for the work of the Society, which includes the Ministry, something of the same importance which training ships have for a fleet, and so far as is consistent with general education, they should have a curriculum specially designed to this end.

It is of contributory importance that the whole equipment and general education of our schools, apart from this special feature, should be of the highest possible standard. Our schools should be so good that no Friend need be tempted to send his children elsewhere. If this is not so already, it is due more to the lack of funds than to any fault in management. One must suppose that the exceptional importance of these schools as contributing to the spiritual efficiency of our church is not understood, otherwise it is difficult to explain why our wealthy Friends overlook our educational institutions, and allow them to struggle on under a cloud of debt, or with miserably inadequate endowments.

The especial value of denominational education, as already defined, to a small Society like ours, lends also an added importance to the position of the school teachers. Upon their influence much depends, and the church having accepted the responsibility of a free ministry, her future must be largely in their hands. The career and prospects of a Quaker teacher should then be such as to attract the highest order of mind, and to encourage the most liberal training for the service.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that Friends will be able efficiently to maintain their middle-class schools, especially if they can command the proper endowment which American Friends in their wisdom have been careful to secure. But it may be seriously doubted whether we shall have the strength to provide for those who would, in the ordinary course, be educated in Board Schools.

This, however, will only emphasise the importance of retaining our hold on the class which represents the educated and hereditary stock, whose connection with the past is too valuable to lose.

- (2) *The religious training of our young people after school, and of those who are not taught in Friends' Schools.*

If we recognise the great value of our Boarding Schools, it is clearly essential that the religious training of those who are not educated by the Society should have careful attention. But no consecutive training exists; we have some children's classes with more or less scattered teaching, but there is no constructive development carefully planned to qualify the young people for the exceptional demands of our church membership.

We need, also, training of a quality and calibre suited to those who have just left a Friends' school, but who have hardly reached the stage when private Biblical study can yield proper sustenance. The want of any arrangement by which the interests of our young people are rightly directed at a critical period of life, to the support of the meeting for worship, is already disastrous in its consequences, and calls for immediate action.

- (3) *The religious training of our adult members.*

Already under this head we may chronicle the appearance of the Summer School movement, and note the valuable correspondence class of the Young Friends' Christian Fellowship Union.

These are admirable, and such work calls only for encouragement, but inasmuch as they are largely independent of the special attitude and teaching of our Religious Society, there remains an important branch of the work, which has hitherto received little attention. We have already noticed in our Society the widespread ignorance as to what constitutes our spiritual heritage. We have called attention to the vagueness of view too often found, when a Friend is questioned upon the spiritual position and historical significance of the church to which he belongs. We must supplement the Summer School work by placing within the reach of all our adult members, advanced religious teaching, similar in aim to that which we have seen to be needful for our children.

This is especially urgent in view of the more frequent admission of new members. The experience of Friends in America should impress us with the importance of this consideration. There is no doubt that where American Friends have drawn in large numbers of outsiders, they have sometimes felt the lack of that controlling and guiding influence which an intelligent understanding of the past necessarily brings. A scheme of lectures on Quaker History, on the teaching of George Fox, on the life and writings of Penn, on the Apology of Barclay, on the Journal of Woolman, or, to come to more modern times, on Elizabeth Fry, on William Allen, on John Greenleaf Whittier, should be worked out, not simply with the view of presenting biographical sketches, and interesting historical data, but in order to bring out what we have already called "the practical, spiritual, and non-

sacerdotal aspects of Divine truth," in relation to individual and national life. The isolated addresses on Friends' principles, which are at present our only substitute for more systematic work in this field, are hardly satisfactory, and are certainly insufficient.

We believe a feasible way of meeting, at least in part, the present need, would be to reserve the entire services of a suitable Friend, probably remunerated and controlled through the Summer School Continuation Committee, who would devote part of his time to necessary study, and the remainder to lecturing in different centres. These lectures would naturally be of a varied character. In some meetings a definite course might be given, in others separate lectures. In small country meetings, the magic-lantern might be used with effect, and the public might usually be encouraged to attend. The lectures could also be extended to our Adult Schools, for it is along this line, without necessarily sacrificing the undenominational character which they maintain, that the gulf between the Society and the schools is most likely to be bridged.

It will be seen, that this suggestion does not conflict with existing Summer School work, but is a development of that already begun. Even the Church of England has found it necessary to adopt like measures, and we can hardly pretend that our standard of intelligence is so high that we can dispense with such education.

Thus far, we have endeavoured to indicate some of the directions in which our general conception of equipment for membership in the Society of Friends

may be enlarged. We, have, in other words, been dwelling upon *the necessity of providing a rich soil from which the ministry may spring*. At present, the conditions of our church life are such as to starve the ministry. We do not foster its growth—we neglect the ordinary duties of the husbandman, and complain because the harvest is poor.

But there is another and a serious consideration. Is the tender plant that springs from this carefully prepared soil to be left to itself? We must accept a further responsibility. There must be means placed within the reach of any Friend, who feels the call to the ministry, for still further equipment, and for closer study.

There should be established a *permanent* Summer School, if one may be permitted thus to stretch the season of sunshine and warmth over the whole of our inclement year. This must not be a Theological College, but a permanent Bible School, open to either sex, and to persons of any age. Friends who did not feel themselves called to the ministry would be at liberty to attend, but the curriculum would be aimed mainly at the development of ministerial gifts. Without attempting to detail the scope of study, three main divisions naturally suggest themselves:—

- (1) Biblical Study.
- (2) General Church History; and
- (3) Quaker Church History.

These subjects would be handled with the definite intention of giving clearness and force to our spiritual message. The mistake of most theological teaching lies in the fact that truth is conceived as a crystal, and not as a seed. To teach general Church History,

which, of course, includes the history of our Society, side by side with its spiritual meaning, is to avoid this error, and to set the student in the line of spiritual growth and vision.

The "lay" character of the school would be prominently kept in mind, and facilities would be offered to those whose means were limited, or who had little time to give. Some would attend only to receive sufficient advice and training to set them along lines of fruitful study at home, and much assistance might in this connection be given by correspondence classes. Such a school would necessarily commence on a small scale, and the attendance would at first be very limited especially for the longer periods of time. But as Friends are gradually brought to recognise what the responsibility of a free ministry involves, they will learn to shape their lives in subordination to it.

Let us remember, for we cannot escape the fact, that our free ministry is now upon its trial. No half measures will solve the problem which faces us. We would repeat that self-sacrifice must be the price of our ideal. Sacrifice of leisure, business sacrifices, sacrifices of money, sacrifice of personal ease and comfort. But while nothing that has been suggested can be undertaken without self-sacrifice, there is nothing to alarm. Spiritual insight remains, as it always must, the mark of the true minister, and neither the prophetic ministry, which obeys an immediate call, nor that mystic element which is the quality of a few choice souls, can be imperilled. We seek not to stereotype our worship, nor to tamper with the freedom of spiritual dependence upon God, but to secure such a

general condition of church life that spiritual growth shall be fostered, and a high standard of spiritual intelligence shall be maintained. For want of proper nourishment, the ideal of the free ministry is perishing before our eyes, and we are but seeking a rich and well-tilled soil from which every type of ministry shall spring with a robuster growth.

It may seem that even this partial solution of the problem is difficult and slow. The drudgery of hard work is evident through it all. But this must be. There is no short and easy way ; we must go back to our foundations, and begin again. We must correct the consequences of past mistakes, and, for a time, at least, there will be much labour with small reward.

This brings us at the close to that which we have never forgotten. We can do nothing without the patience of a faith that sees clear through apparent discouragement to its goal. We need the vision of the end, the sense of a high and worthy aim to spur us on, and, dependent on a Power greater than our own, we need the humble spirit which asks that it may be ever led by the Master's hand.